

# INDIGENOUS ALLYSHIP: AN OVERVIEW

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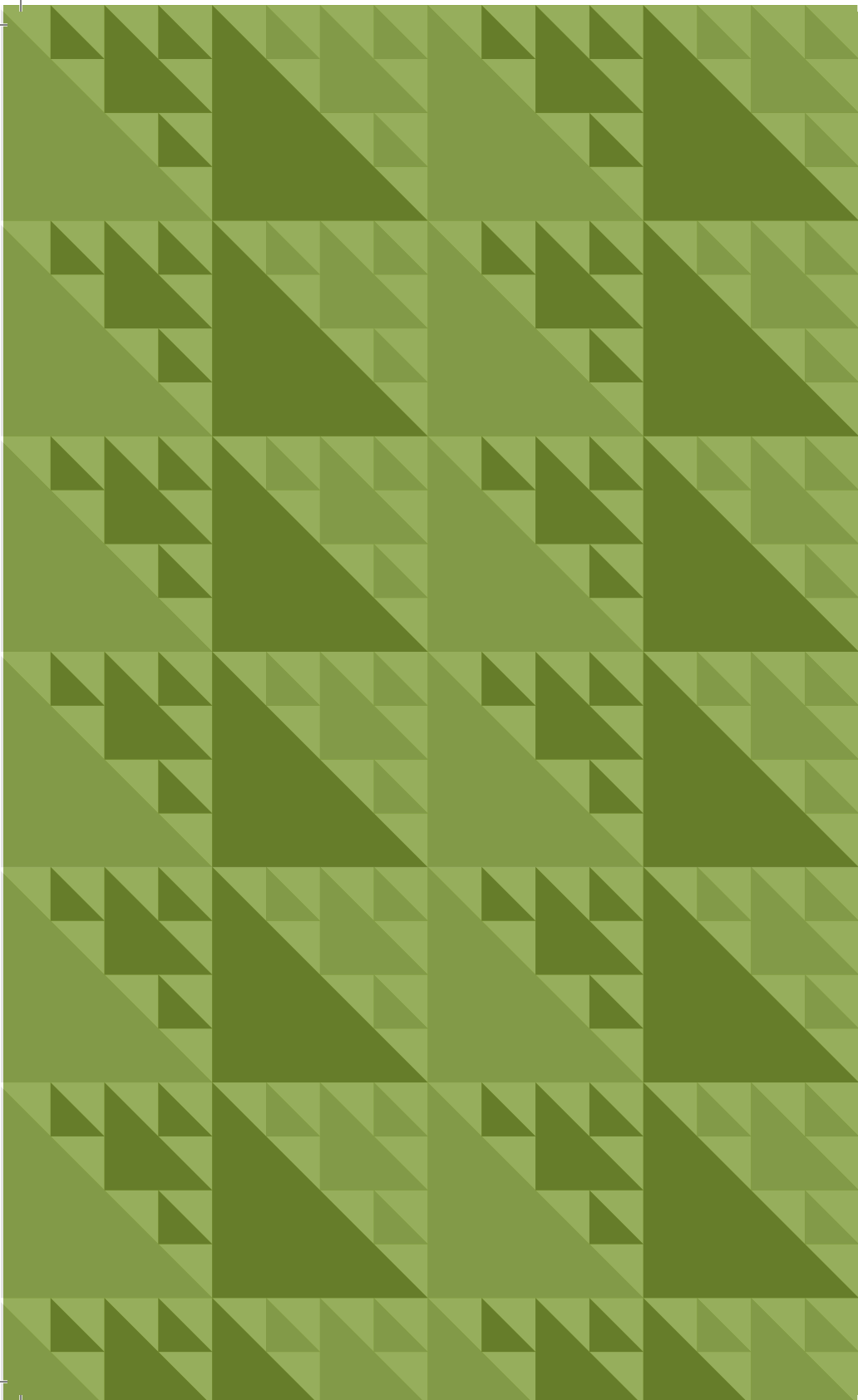


a relationship  
of mutual respect

## Indigenous Allyship: An Overview


This document will act as a resource for non-Indigenous people seeking to become allies to Aboriginal people. To help allies understand the struggle for decolonization and nationhood and what effective allyship to Aboriginal peoples means.

The following document will provide a condensed summation of what academic and popular literature has to say about being an ally, including positive practices (what aspiring allies can do) and negative practices (approaches that are discouraged), and will conclude with a list of resources for further learning.




# Definitions

Before getting into the details of how one can begin their process of decolonization and start on their path towards allyship, it is important to provide a number of definitions. Some of the terminology that one needs to be aware of when thinking about allyship with Indigenous Peoples in Canada follows. This terminology will be helpful for gaining an understanding of what allyship is and what it focuses on. Second, this list of definitions will help to orient the aspiring ally to the Indigenous Peoples that live in Canada and, more specifically, in south-western Ontario.



*Allyship is a means to an end: the **reconciliation** of historical and contemporary wrongdoings and the **rectification** of the inequitable colonial systems.*



## ALLYSHIP

To be an ally, it is not enough to merely be motivated to express minimal or no prejudice towards Aboriginal Peoples. As already stated, in order to be an ally, non-Aboriginal people must actively engage in decolonizing processes. Brown and Ostrove (2013) assert that allies can be distinguished by two characteristics: first, allies have a desire to actively support social justice; to promote the rights of the non-dominant groups and to eliminate social inequalities that the allies benefit from; and second, allies offer support by establishing meaningful relationships with people and communities of the non-dominant group that they wish to ally themselves and to ensure accountability to those people and communities (Brown & Ostrove, 2013). Brown and Ostrove's definition is helpful as it indicates that allyship is about supporting (not leading), working to change unjust and inequitable systems and institutions, and establishing meaningful relationships with Indigenous peoples and communities where one is invested and accountable. Allyship is a means to an end: the reconciliation of historical and contemporary wrongdoings and the rectification of the inequitable colonial systems.

One of the most important things to remember about allyship is that it is a continuous process; it is not a designation that one can earn and hold forevermore. Allies must continually engage in self-reflexivity, and must consistently work at being an ally (through learning, acting in a de-colonial manner, and sustaining relationships with Indigenous Peoples, etc.). In other words, it is impossible to 'become an ally' it is only possible to 'aspire to be an ally,' as allyship requires one to constantly cast a critical eye on themselves, to re-evaluate how they are choosing to live and carry themselves, and to think about how their lifestyle and choices (directly or indirectly) impact Indigenous Peoples. Allyship is a journey that one embarks upon with the distant goal of 'being an ally' never truly in reach, for, one can be seen as an ally in the eyes of one person but not another.

Another important consideration for allyship is the prescription of the label "ally". It is not appropriate for non-Indigenous people to prescribe themselves with the title of being an "ally" to Indigenous Peoples. Allyship is something that is designated by a person or community that one is aspiring to ally themselves with, because it is only possible for Indigenous Peoples to truly evaluate and ascertain the degree to which they think a non-Indigenous person is being their ally. Therefore, Indigenous Peoples are the only ones that can deem a non-Indigenous person an ally.

## ABORIGINAL

The term ‘Aboriginal’ is a legal term used by the Canadian government as a way to easily and efficiently address the three main Indigenous groups in Canada: First Nations/Indian (status and non-status), Métis, and Inuit. It is important to recognize the significance of language. The Federal Government of Canada defined the term ‘Aboriginal’ in Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution Act in 1982 (Constitution Act, 1982). The term acts as a universalising umbrella that does not acknowledge the great amount of diversity amongst the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. For instance, just within the First Nations populations, “there are currently 617 First Nations, representing more than 50 cultural groups and living in over 1000 communities and elsewhere across the country” (Anaya, 2014, pg. 4). As such, it is not a term that every First Nations, Métis, and Inuit person is willing to identify as. Many people prefer to identify with their local Nation (i.e. Mohawk, Seneca, Oneida, Mississauga, Anishinabeg, etc.) So, respecting what one wants to be identified as is crucial. Throughout this document, I will use ‘Aboriginal’, ‘FNMI’ (First Nations, Métis, Inuit), and Indigenous interchangeably.

## DECOLONIZATION

Resurgence and decolonization are about confronting the systemic inequalities that privilege non-Indigenous People while simultaneously disadvantaging Aboriginal Peoples. Alfred and Cortassel (2005) assert that decolonization is not at root a collective and institutional process, but “...shifts in thinking and action that emanate from recommitments and reorientations at the level of the self that, over time and through proper organization, manifest as broad social and political movements to challenge state agendas and authorities” (Alfred & Cortassel, 2005, pg. 611). In other words, decolonization begins at the level of the individual, in which people gain an awareness of how their actions and lives benefit or (directly or indirectly) contribute to the perpetuation of colonial relations and the disenfranchisement of Indigenous Peoples. Decolonization is about gaining such awareness and shifting one’s behaviour to challenge such relations.

Decolonization is not something that can be universally defined; however, there are certain elements that can be seen across different contexts. For Aboriginal people, decolonization is first and foremost about achieving self-determination over their lands and social, political, cultural, and economic institutions. However, decolonization is also a political spectrum: for some, decolonization means that their Nations get all of their traditional

lands back (Tuck & Yang, 2012); for others, it means reclaiming their Indigeneity on an individual level. Expressing the latter position, Absolon (2011) discusses decolonization and re-indigenization as involving "...learning and practising [her] culture; learning [her] language; speaking [her] language; fighting ethnocentrism in education, research and writing; battling institutional racism; and the list goes on" (Pg. 19).

## INDIGENOUS

While there remains no universally agreed upon definition of the term 'Indigenous,' the one main characteristic of Indigenous Peoples is that they existed in a place prior to colonization. Thus, any people that lived in a place prior to colonial contact are Indigenous to that area (FoxTree, 2014).

First Nation (Status and non-Status): The Indian Act (1876) defines the federally recognized membership of First Nations peoples by dividing them into two categories: status and non-status. Though the requirements for holding, maintaining, and passing membership on to successive generations has undergone some amendments since the 1876 version of the Indian Act, the Federal Government still defines who is legally recognized as a First Nations person. Status First Nations peoples are recognized by the government as being eligible to receive certain special rights set out in the Indian Act. Non-Status First Nations people are not eligible to receive these additional rights.

Due to the scope of this document, it is not possible to present information on all of the First Nations groups in Canada. Instead, the document will briefly identify the major First Nations in the Kitchener-Waterloo area due to the historical and contemporary claims to the territory:

## ANISHINABE, HAUDENOSAUNEE / SIX NATIONS / IROQUOIS

Also known as Ojibway/Chippewa/Mississauga/Algonquin. There is historical evidence that the land where the Region of Waterloo is located was once home to the Anishinabe. The Anishinabe's original ancestral home was located on the north shore of Lake Huron, mouth of the Mississauga River. During the 17th century, the Anishinabe split, with groups migrating east to the Bay of Quinte and south into what is now known as south-western Ontario (from Toronto to Lake Erie) ([newcreditfirstnation.com](http://newcreditfirstnation.com)). During the 18th century, the Anishinabe began losing land due to European settlement and the northern movement of the Haudenosaunee into south-western Ontario ([newcreditfirstnation.com](http://newcreditfirstnation.com)). Today, Anishinabe in south-western Ontario include the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, Aamjiwnaang, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, and the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point.



## DEFINITIONS

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy originally consisted of five Nations: Cayuga, Oneida, Onondaga, Mohawk, and Seneca. In 1722, the Tuscarora joined to form the Six Nations. The Haudenosaunee reside in parts of Ontario and Upstate New York. The largest reserve in North America is the Six Nations of the Grand River, located near Brantford, Ontario. Other communities where Haudenosaunee reside include Tyendinaga, Awkwesasne, and Oneida Nation of the Thames, to name a few.

Kitchener-Waterloo is located on the Haldimand Tract, which, on October 25, 1784, after the American Revolutionary War of Independence, was given to the Six Nations of the Grand River by the British as compensation for their role in the war and for the loss of their traditional lands in Upstate New York ([www.sixnations.ca](http://www.sixnations.ca)). Of the 950,000 acres given to the Haudenosaunee (six miles on either side of the Grand River, all the way along its length), only 46,000 acres (less than 5 per cent) remains Six Nations land ([www.sixnations.ca](http://www.sixnations.ca)).

It is important to note that Wilfrid Laurier University's Waterloo and Brantford campuses are both located on the Haldimand Tract.


### INUIT

The Inuit are one of the recognized Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. In Canada, The Inuit Peoples' traditional home is in the Arctic and subarctic in Nunavut, Northern Québec, Labrador, and Northwest Territories.

### MÉTIS

The Métis are one of the recognized Aboriginal peoples in Canada. The Métis peoples are of mixed First Nations and European descent. Initially, the label was used for any offspring that came from the union of a First Nations and European couple; however, through the generations since European contact in 1492, a distinct Métis culture evolved. As such, not all children of mixed heritage are Métis—only those that associate themselves with the distinct Métis culture are. The Métis are scattered all across Canada, and there is a large representation of Métis in the Kitchener-Waterloo region.

These definitions will be helpful both for reference within this document as well as for personal knowledge. The following sections of this document are by no means comprehensive. They are meant to be a starting point and a resource to be expanded upon as one continues along their journey of decolonization and allyship.



*Once we enter that world with another ...  
[it] can lead to many things.  
One of them is change.*

—MICHELLE LEBARON

## Actions to Consider

In order to be a successful ally to FNMI people, one must go beyond merely being well intentioned and sympathetic towards Aboriginal peoples' circumstances. Allyship requires hard work: humility, respect, and commitment are some of the qualities necessary to be considered an ally by Aboriginal people. Still, what does this mean? What does an ally do? And perhaps more importantly, what does an ally *not* do? There are many things that aspiring allies can consider doing and, at the same time, there are also many actions of well-intentioned individuals that can prove to cause more harm than good. This is critical to be conscious of as an aspiring ally to Aboriginal people because non-Aboriginal people are in positions of power, and thus, their every action has serious implications.

**BUILD RELATIONSHIP:** One of the most important tenets of allyship that has been iterated throughout the academic and popular literature is the notion of relationship. While important for any type of allyship, this is especially critical for being an ally to Aboriginal people because relationship is a fundamental and central value of many Aboriginal cultures. A number of reasons explicate the importance of relationship building to being an ally to Aboriginal people.

First, becoming an ally is about building trust. Throughout generations non-Aboriginal people have felt that they knew what Aboriginal people want and need, and have implemented policies and programs that have had devastating effects on many Aboriginal people. Understandably, in order to protect themselves from exploitation, Aboriginal people have come to be suspicious of and distrust non-Aboriginals. Building trusting relationships is an important step in bringing down these barriers.

Second, relationship is critical because being an Ally to Aboriginal people is not about taking the lead; it is about acting in solidarity in ways that Aboriginal people deem acceptable and beneficial. In other words, an ally walks beside, not in front. Without fostering relationships with Aboriginal people and communities non-Aboriginal people cannot know what actions are acceptable. This is an important part of decolonization, as it forces non-Aboriginal people to suppress their privileged voices and the notion of superiority that has been impressed upon them from birth, and to listen to the perspectives of Aboriginal people. Regan (2010) highlights the negative colonial mentality that espouses the superiority of the colonizer in all facets of life, and asserts that in order to be an ally to Aboriginal people one must see the fallibility and inappropriateness of non-Aboriginal perspectives and practices for Aboriginal peoples' struggle for liberation and to make room for Aboriginal voices (Regan, 2010).

Finally, relationship creates accountability and responsibility for sustained action, and is fundamental to meaningful coexistence (Irlbacher-Fox, 2012).

**LEARN:** About oppression and privilege. About the history of colonization. About Aboriginal peoples and cultures. About the land you live on. To listen.

**OPPRESSION AND PRIVILEGE:** Oppression is not only something that is individually perpetuated through things like racial slurs. Oppression is engrained in the fabric of the Canadian systems and institutions. It is structural and systemic. Through policies the Canadian Government has embedded inequitable systems that disadvantage Aboriginal people while privileging the settler population. As Bishop (2002) says, “your ignorance is part of the oppression,” so only by learning about the forms of oppression is one able to contribute positively to the fight against oppression (Bishop, 2002). Learning about oppression is a continuous journey, one that an ally can never fully achieve. Understanding that one can never truly comprehend the oppression that Aboriginal people feel is important to remind ourselves. Failing to reflect on and embrace this ignorance can contribute to the further perpetuation of Aboriginal peoples’ oppression (Gehl, N.D.; Bishop, 2002).

A necessary extension of learning about oppression is learning about the opposite side of the power relation: privilege. Privilege is the recognition that success is not determined solely by one’s hard work and dedication, but that one’s ability to succeed is largely dependent upon their positionality within the systems (race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, physical appearance, physical ability, psychological well-being, socio-economic status, etc.) (Nelson and Prilleltensky, 2012). These elements of peoples’ contexts intersect with one another, creating intersections of oppression and privilege. For example, a person who is male, white skinned, cisgender, and heterosexual is more privileged than a white male who is cisgender and homosexual. In the case of allyship, a settler has more privilege than an Aboriginal person. Due to the intersections of race, socio-economic status, and the other aforementioned elements settlers are privileged because they benefit from the dispossession of Indigenous Peoples’ lands. Privilege is when people and groups benefit from unearned advantages that increase their power relative to others, at the expense of others (McIntosh, N.D.; Nakata, Nakata, Keech & Bolt, 2012; Gehl, 2013a; Gehl, 2013b).

**HISTORY:** A critical component of being an ally to Aboriginal people is learning about the history of colonization of North America—not from the perspectives of the dominant society, which tends to portray the colonization of North America as benign, through the lens of the Doctrine of Discovery, but from the perspective of the Aboriginal people. History is always political, and the histories taught in the mainstream education system are the ones that are presented by the colonizer. So much of the truth of our shared history, history from Aboriginal perspectives, is not acknowledged. These histories reveal that while the colonization of Canada and the United States was done in part by means of forced removal of Indigenous Peoples from their lands, in many cases the Dutch, British, and French Crowns—and the subsequent settler-colonial governments—entered into Treaty agreements with Aboriginal Nations, which the Canadian and United States Governments proceeded to violate time and again (Dickason, 2009; Saul, 2009; King, 2012).

Another revelation that is highlighted through reading about the history of colonization in North America is the fact that it is not only an historical phenomenon but also a contemporary reality. Colonization has and continues to concern land and natural resources (Cote-Meek, 2014). The foundation of the Canadian Government's economy—and in reality, the global economy—is based on resource extraction (through oil, minerals, precious metals, etc.). This means that Canada's agenda is prioritized on accessing more resource-rich lands in order to capitalize on the resources found in and on the lands. While not all Indigenous Peoples are opposed to capitalist development, communities have the right of self-determination to decide whether or not they wish to engage in such activity, and many Indigenous communities oppose it because of the cultural and spiritual significance of their homelands. This means that many Aboriginal communities oppose the Government's encroachment onto their lands with the intent of taking the resources. (This is a highly political matter that is far beyond the scope of this document, so our discussion of this will be limited to this short piece. If you wish to read more about it, check out Deloria, 2003, Hall, 2012, and Tuck & Yang, 2012—their references are in the appendix of this document). Such conflict over resources has motivated the development of numerous racist and genocidal policies, laws, and institutions over the past two hundred years aimed at assimilating Aboriginal people into Canadian society and culture, thereby finally solving “the Indian problem”. Some notable examples include: the Indian Act, 1876; the Indian Residential School system; the White Paper, 1969; the Jobs and Growth Act, 2012 (Bill C-45); and what is under proposal as of this writing, the Anti-Terrorism Act, 2015 (Bill C-51).

**PEOPLE AND CULTURES:** One cannot become an ally to FNMI without learning about the peoples and their cultures. This goes back to the notion of relationship; a central component of building a relationship with people and communities is about gaining an appreciation and a greater degree of

understanding of the ‘other’ through interaction. An ally can—and is encouraged to—learn independently. However, not all learning can, or should, occur apart from personal interaction. In addition, learning about Aboriginal cultures contributes to the cultural revitalization and re-emergence of culture. Since the late 18th century, the Canadian Government has continued to impose policies and programs aimed at assimilating Aboriginal people into the dominant Canadian culture by means of cultural genocide (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Alston-O’Connor, 2010; Battiste, 2011). These policies had—and continue to have—devastating effects. However, the strength and resilience of Aboriginal peoples and cultures prevented the success of these policies and programs. And in recent years Aboriginal peoples and cultures have been resurging. Learning about the cultures contributes to such resurgence.

Learning about cultural practices, histories, beliefs, and languages contributes to the re-indigenization of Aboriginal peoples. And learning about these important things as a non-Indigenous person contributes to resisting colonization as it keeps the knowledge and cultures alive—which is in direct opposition to the goal of settler-colonialism.

**LAND:** Land is critical. To be an effective ally to Aboriginal people, one must learn about, not only the ontological and epistemological importance of land for Aboriginal cultures, but also about whose land it is that you are on. The relationship that Aboriginal people have with the land is completely different from that of the Western/Canadian relationship to land (Deloria, 2003; Beaton, et al., 2009). Whereas the Western/Canadian relationship with land is hierarchical, with humans dominating and controlling the land and exploiting it for their benefit, Aboriginal peoples’ relationship with land is horizontal, in which respect and reciprocity are emphasized (Mohawk, 1995; Deloria, 2003; Nelson, 2008; Beaton, et al., 2009; Simpson, 2011). As mentioned earlier in the document, the land that both of Wilfrid Laurier University’s primary campuses are located on is traditionally Haudenosaunee (Six Nations/ Iroquois), Anishinabe, and Neutral. Legally, it is recognized as Haudenosaunee land due to the Haldimand Treaty in 1784 mentioned above.

Learning about whose land you are on and acknowledging the fact that it is the territory of those Peoples is an important action to take to combat the continued erasure (i.e. the idea that Aboriginal people no longer exist) of Indigenous Peoples from their lands.

Some departments at WLU have begun implementing this practice into their official course procedures by integrating a formal acknowledgement that WLU is located on the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishnabe, and Haudenosaunee peoples.

**LISTENING:** In any exchange where there is a genuine effort to learn and to build relationship, one must observe and listen with an open mind and an open heart. This skill is particularly important for non-Aboriginal people who wish to be allies to Aboriginal people. It is a skill that many non-Aboriginal people lack. The Western/Canadian culture has instilled in its citizens a profound inability to view the value of other cultures, and as such, there can be the tendency to not listen, and to believe that one already knows what is right. This is something that non-Aboriginal allies must continually and consciously work on improving, because allyship is not about taking the lead. It is about standing in solidarity and supporting Aboriginal people and privileging their voices.

Making space for Aboriginal people and listening with an open mind and an open heart is about listening even when the things one hears and learns provokes unsettling realizations about how the settlers have treated Aboriginal people and how the Canadian system purposely disadvantages Aboriginal people. Regan (2010) provides a quote by LeBaron:

“The first step in truly listening is silence, not just refraining from speaking but “being silence.” Being silence is not an action or inaction; it is a state that engages our bodies, minds, feelings, and spirits. When we are being silence, we are concentrating, still and calm. Our thoughts are silent. Our attention is in the present... When we are willing to enter a space of listening... we will hear, know and sense things both spoken and unspoken... We don’t know how this happens, but we know that it does happen. It is as though the stories that are shared are doorways into many other stories... Once we enter that world with another... [it] can lead to many things. One of them is change.”

This quote is brilliantly and beautifully put, and shows that in order to listen effectively one must be active in their listening. One must *want* to listen.

It is critical to heed the sources of the information that one gets, especially when it relates to Indigenous peoples, cultures, histories, and experiences. Because everything is socially constructed, meaning that our perspectives and ways of understanding and knowing (our



epistemologies) and our ways of viewing the world (our ontologies) are shaped by our social environments (families, histories, cultures, experiences, socio-political and economic positionings, etc.), information is not objective. As Lincoln (1995) asserts, texts (and any perspectives for that matter) “...are always partial and incomplete; socially, culturally, historically, racially, and sexually located; and can therefore never represent any truth except those truths that exhibit the same characteristics” (Pg. 280). All information is shaped and constructed through the author’s lens(es) representing where they are located in society. Take academia for instance: academic institutions are colonial spaces that are dominated by the settler-colonial cultural values including its epistemological and ontological standpoints (Cote-Meek, 2014). This means that most of the knowledge that exists within academia has been produced by non-Indigenous people and thus has been interpreted, reshaped, and re-presented through a settler-colonial lens. Thus, knowledge that exists within academia does not automatically give that knowledge validity or credibility. So, while there are some high-quality sources of knowledge from non-Indigenous people, best practice is to privilege Indigenous voices.

**ACT:** Allies have a responsibility to act. This is a component of what Brown and Ostrove (2013) are referring to when they say that one of the characteristics of an ally is accountability. Accountability towards Aboriginal people and communities is about taking action by supporting Aboriginal people and communities in their liberation efforts. But this does not mean waiting around to always be told what to do—such a position may further burden Aboriginal people (Walia, 2012). Montreal activist Jaggi Singh said that “[t]he only way to escape complicity with settlement is active opposition to it. That only happens in the context of on-the-ground, day-to-day organizing, and creating and cultivating the spaces where we can begin dialogues and discussions as natives and non-natives” (Walia, 2012). The following are a number of actions that Allies can do to be accountable to Aboriginal people and communities:

**EDUCATION:** One of the most critical actions that allies can and should do is educate other non-Aboriginal people about what they are learning. Of these learnings, the most important things to educate non-Aboriginal people about are oppression, privilege, and about one’s own experience of their journey as an ally. Teaching people—especially

## POSITIVE ACTIONS

younger generations—about the realities of the situation is necessary for changing the negative societal attitudes and behaviours towards Aboriginal peoples.

**REFLECT UPON INTENTIONS AND MOTIVATIONS:** It is good practice to always question one's motivation for becoming an ally. Edwards (2006) provides an evolving conceptualization of an ally being immersed in three interconnected phases that continually build on one another: first, is an ally for self-interest who is motivated by protecting loved ones from harm; second, is an ally for altruism who is motivated by guilt (white/settler guilt); and third, is an ally that is driven to address the systemic roots of oppression by a philosophy and commitment to the betterment of society. As articulated throughout this document, the latter phase of Edwards' conceptual model is the position taken by non-Indigenous people that are perceived by Indigenous people as true allies. This highlights the importance of constantly examining one's intentions for engaging with Indigenous people and communities. As mentioned earlier, self-reflexivity is critically important as it allows for one to gain awareness of one's intentions and motivations, ways of thinking, and actions in a meaningful way and understand what the implications are. Of particular importance is reflecting on one's experiences of privilege to ensure that one's actions do not contribute to the perpetuation of oppression of the very people one is trying to be an ally to. Self-reflexivity can include asking questions such as: 'why do I want to work with Indigenous people?', 'what benefits will I enjoy in this endeavour?', 'can I practice conscious awareness of my place of power and privilege?', and 'how can I prevent thoughts and feelings of knowing what is best?'. While this is not an exhaustive list of questions to ask one's self in order to reflect on intent and motives, it can provide a space to continue to examine one's aspirations to be an ally.

**APPROACH POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES:** Non-Aboriginal people can use their voices to contact the government and offer support to the process of decolonization. As a society that claims to value democracy, it is imperative that people use the power it gives them (the right to vote; the right to mobilize and demand government to hear the people) to demand that the government make changes. This cannot only come from Aboriginal people, but must also come from the settler population.

**CULTURAL APPROPRIATION:** Appropriation is the acquisition of intellectual property, traditional understandings, cultural expressions, and/or artifacts from another's culture without their permission. This includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized use of another culture's dance, music, language, traditional medicine, ceremonial practice, etc. Appropriation can be overt or subtle. The appropriation of culture is particularly harmful when the source community has been oppressed and exploited in other ways or when the object of appropriation is of significance such as sacred objects (Scafidi, 2005). Through the impact of colonization, Indigenous Peoples have experienced continued oppression and marginalization; thus, cultural appropriation can cause further exploitation and oppression for Indigenous people. To ensure that this does not occur, it is good practice for aspiring allies to be fully grounded in their own ancestral history, ways of understanding and knowing, worldviews, and culture. Thus, creating a space in which to find the commonalities without appropriating. By thoroughly examining one's own culture and being deeply rooted in their understanding of who they are and where they come from allies will be able to resist the temptation to actively engage in cultural appropriation. As Baskin (2011) explains, an effective way to engage in Indigenous ways of helping, as non-Indigenous persons, is to concentrate on an Indigenous worldview rather than cultural and spiritual practices. Further, Baskin (2011) explains how a worldview is a foundation of values, principles, and ethics that guides how one experiences and sees the environment, people, communities, challenges, etc.

While this does not mean a non-Indigenous person can never participate in cultural practices, it does mean that those cultural practices cannot be ascertained without the adherence to proper protocol and permission from the appropriate people. This connects to the section on relationship above; without having the trusting relationships with people and communities through which you are invited to take part in cultural practices, engaging in such activities is disrespectful and constitutes colonial behaviour. For, as we mentioned before, colonization involves resource extraction. This is not limited to the exploitation of Indigenous Peoples' lands and natural resources but also encompasses the exploitation of cultural and spiritual knowledge, practices, and artifacts.

**TAKE LEADERSHIP:** As mentioned above, allies should never take leadership (Gehl, 2013a; Gehl, 2013b). Again, this does not provide non-Aboriginals with an excuse to be inactive, for, as stated above, there are actions that non-Aboriginal allies can take on their own. What this is referring to more specifically is that non-Aboriginals should never be in the role of the leader of a movement or other efforts on behalf of Aboriginal people. Such actions prove to further disempower Aboriginal people. Bishop (2002) states this, saying that allies should “[n]ever take public action or credit for an oppressed group’s process of liberation” and that they should “[r]efuse to act as a spokesperson, even when reporters gravitate to [them] because they are more comfortable with [them]” (Bishop, 2002). The only time non-Aboriginals should speak in public is if Aboriginal people have asked them to “...speak from their point of view as an ally or to take a public role on their behalf because speaking out will be too dangerous for them” (Bishop, 2002).

Respecting this is an action in and of itself; namely, action against the Western ‘saviour complex’ and white privilege, which characterize the approach toward issues of injustice that have been sustained and ingrained in Western societies for centuries. This ‘saviour complex’ gave rise to the policies responsible for colonization and the mission civilisatrice in which European colonial empires set out to ‘lift the uncivilized Indigenous people up and into civilization,’ and free them from their inevitable damnation by casting them in the light of Christianity (Paris, 2002; Regan, 2010). These policies and ways of thinking are not a thing of the past, but still colour policies and industries that we have today.

With that said, it is appropriate and necessary for allies to take leadership in some contexts. For example: leading a campaign to educate their peers, petitioning governments, etc.

**INTERFERE:** Aboriginal peoples and Nations are not homogenous. Great diversity exists within and between different Nations. And wherever there is diversity there is difference of opinion, beliefs, etc., and thus, conflicts and struggles are inevitable to arise. Allies should not intrude or interfere in struggles within and between communities, unless explicitly called in, and even then, non-Indigenous people should not attempt to take over the situation. Doing so also serves to perpetuate the civilizing ideology held by the West and “...violates the basic principles of self-determination” (Walia, 2012).

As decolonization is the central struggle for Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal allies, violating Aboriginal peoples' self-determination is not engaging in decolonization but is reinforcing the colonial structures and relations that exist.

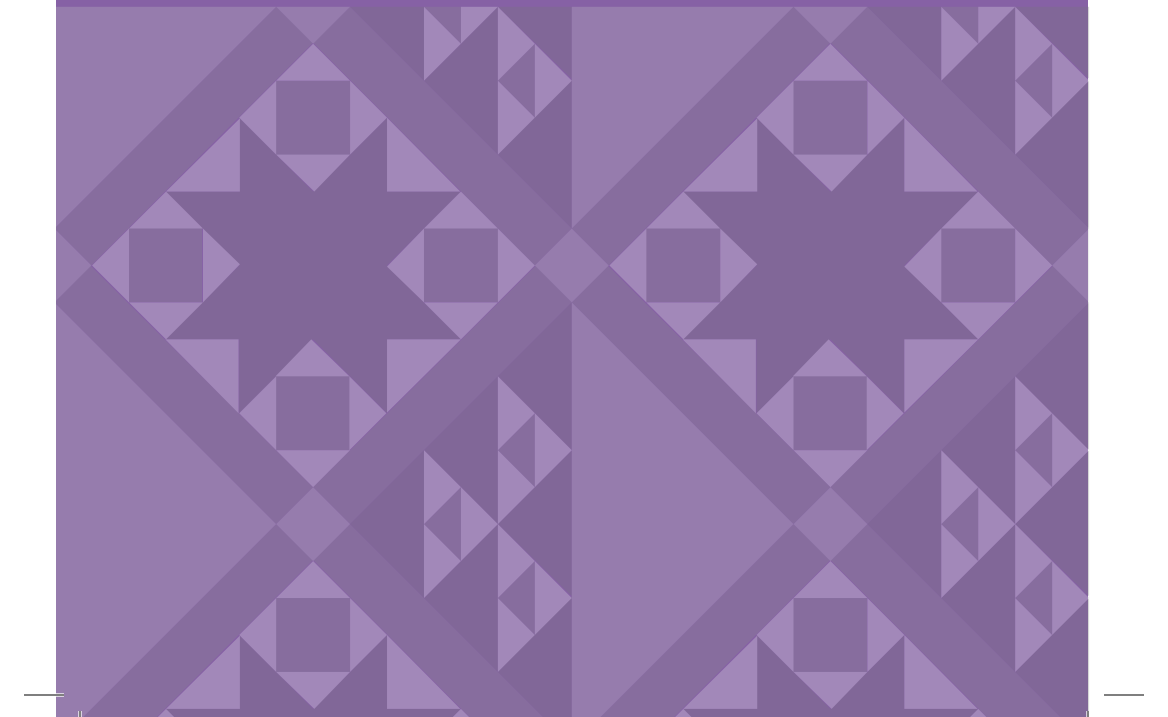
**SEEK EMOTIONAL SUPPORT:** Another important consideration for non-Aboriginals not to do is seek out Aboriginals for emotional support. Aboriginal people need their energy for their own struggles (Bishop, 2002; Gehl, 2013c). The privilege that non-Aboriginals have frees them from many of the burdens that Aboriginal people face; therefore, adding on to Aboriginal peoples' load is disrespectful and is in fact counterproductive. Of course, this needs to be weighed differently depending on the context. This is especially important if a strong relationship does not exist. But if one has a strong, reciprocal, and mutually supportive relationship with Indigenous people, then it is appropriate. There is a difference between seeking support from a friend when struggling with the unsettling feelings that arise from confronting one's position as a settler and taking those same struggles to Indigenous people that one does not know, merely because they are Indigenous.

**HAVE EXPECTATIONS:** Non-Aboriginal people who wish to be allies should not expect Aboriginal people to be grateful to them (Bishop, 2002). The centuries of non-Aboriginal people 'helping' Aboriginals, while implementing harmful policies and practices, have created a climate of distrust and hesitance felt by many Aboriginal people when non-Aboriginals claim to be their allies. So, when beginning to insert oneself into communities with the intention of 'becoming an ally,' do not presume that you will be welcomed with open arms. It takes time, dedication, humility, and a display of prolonged commitment to a community before the walls begin to come down and trust can be established.



## A Living Document

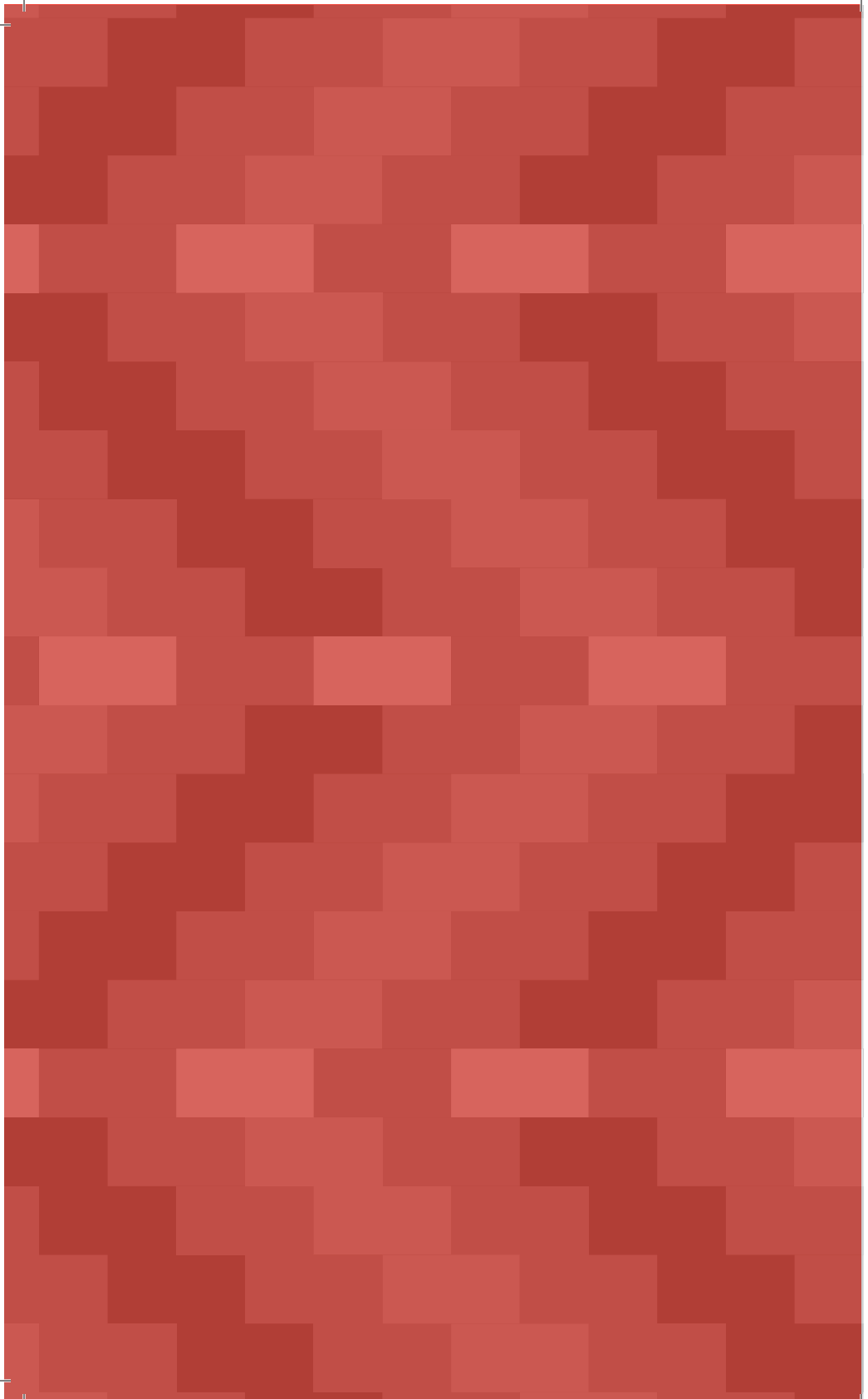
This is a 'living document'. It is subject to change and grow. If you wish to contribute any information to the document, please contact **Melissa Ireland**, Student Support Coordinator at the Aboriginal Student Centre by email at: [mireland@wlu.ca](mailto:mireland@wlu.ca) or by phone at 519.884.0710 x4190.



## Next Steps

This document is meant to express the realities of what it takes to stand in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples in a culturally appropriate and empowering way that prioritizes decolonization. This is a difficult task, one that takes tremendous perseverance, humility, and courage. It is also very rewarding. You will build deep, invaluable relationships with people that challenge you to be a better person and a better community member.

So what's next? Before jumping up and rushing in to take direct action, continue on to the resources listed in the last section of this booklet and continue learning. We've compiled a list of literature resources—both academic literature and non-academic—that is by no means exhaustive, but it should get you on the right track. Additionally, we have included a list of videos and local organizations that might be helpful to you.





# Acknowledgments

This document has been a long time coming. It has gone through numerous iterations since 2012, changing hands a number of times in the process. Special thanks go out to the participants of the allyship workshop that the Aboriginal Student Centre and the Diversity and Equity Office hosted in March, 2014 in which an earlier draft of the document was reviewed and edited by community members, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, as well as to a number of other key individuals who provided feedback on subsequent drafts. The comments and input from everyone involved helped to inform and shape the document into its current form. Another huge thanks goes out to Melissa Ireland, Coordinator of the Aboriginal Student Support Centre at Wilfrid Laurier University, for her persistence over the years and for entrusting us with the task of making it happen. This document would not exist without her.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishinabe, and Haudenosaunee peoples, on whose land the entirety of this work occurred.



# References, Learning Materials and Resources

We've compiled a list of literature resources—both academic literature and non-academic—that is by no means exhaustive, but it should get you on the right track. Additionally, we have included a list of videos and local organizations that might be helpful to you.

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### ADDITIONAL LITERATURE/WEB RESOURCES

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[https://files.ontario.ca/pictures/firstnations\\_map.jpg](https://files.ontario.ca/pictures/firstnations_map.jpg)

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[Video/DVD]

### LOCAL RESOURCES

#### **Anishnabeg Outreach**

**Website:** <http://www.anishnabegoutreach.org/>

#### **Kitchener Office:**

151 Frederick Street Suite 501

Kitchener, ON N2H 2M2

**Phone:** (519) 742-0300

**Fax:** (519) 742-0867

**Toll Free:** 1-866-888-8808

**Email:** [erc@anishnabegoutreach.org](mailto:erc@anishnabegoutreach.org)

#### **Guelph Office**

11A Suffolk Street East

Guelph, ON N1H 2H7

**Phone:** (519) 763-5292

**Fax:** (519) 763-1335

**Toll Free:** 1-855-589-5292

**Email:** [guelph@anishnabegoutreach.org](mailto:guelph@anishnabegoutreach.org)

#### **Queen Street Commons Working Centre**

58 Queen Street South

Kitchener, ON N2G 1V6

**Phone:** (519) 743-1151

**Fax:** (519) 743-9452

**Website:** <http://www.theworkingcentre.org>

## LOCAL RESOURCES

**Aboriginal Student Centre  
and Mino-kummik Community Garden  
at Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo Campus**

187 Albert Street,  
Waterloo, ON N2L 3T4  
Phone: (519) 884-1970 ext. 4190  
Website: <http://www.legacy.wlu.ca/aboriginal>

**Aboriginal Student Centre  
at Wilfrid Laurier University, Brantford Campus**

111 Darling Street,  
Brantford, ON N3T 2K8  
Phone: (519) 756-8228 ext. 5884

**Aboriginal Resource Library  
at Wilfrid Laurier University**

Aboriginal Student Centre, Waterloo Campus  
187 Albert Street,  
Waterloo, ON N2L 3T4  
Phone: (519) 884-1970 ext: 4190

**Master of Social Work, Aboriginal Field of Study  
Wilfrid Laurier University, Kitchener Campus**

120 Duke Street West,  
Kitchener, ON N2H 3W8  
Phone: (519) 884-0710 ext. 5249  
Fax: (519) 888-9732  
Website: [http://www.wlu.ca/homepage.php?grp\\_id=1844](http://www.wlu.ca/homepage.php?grp_id=1844)

**Aboriginal Education Centre,  
University of Waterloo**

St. Paul's United College (at UW)  
Westmount Road North, Waterloo  
Phone: (519) 885-1460 ext. 220  
Fax: (519) 885-6364  
Website: <http://uwaterloo.ca/stpauls/waterloo-aboriginal-education-centre>

REFERENCES, LEARNING MATERIALS  
AND RESOURCES

**Aboriginal Resource Centre, University of Guelph**

Federal Building, Room 102, University of Guelph

620 Gordon Street,

Guelph, ON N1G 2W1

**Phone:** (519) 824-4120 ext. 58704

**Fax:** (519) 827-0432

**Website:** <http://studentlife.uoguelph.ca/oia/>

**Aboriginal Services at Conestoga College**

Room: 1A103

299 Doon Valley Drive,

Kitchener, ON N2G 4M4

**Phone:** (519) 748-5220 ext. 2470 or 2251

**Fax:** (519) 748-3507

**Website:** <http://www.conestogac.on.ca/>

**Métis Nation of Ontario**

500 Old St. Patrick Street, Unit 3

Ottawa, ON K1N 9G4

**Phone:** (613) 798-1488

**Fax:** (613) 722-4225

**Website:** <http://www.metisnation.org>

**Grand River Métis Council**

**Email:** [metisofgrandriver@hotmail.com](mailto:metisofgrandriver@hotmail.com)

**Website:** <http://www.grandrivermetisCouncil.com/>

**Six Nations of the Grand River**

**Website:** <http://sixnations.ca/>

**Woodland Cultural Centre**

184 Mohawk Street, P.O. Box 1506

Brantford, ON N3T 5V6

**Phone:** (519) 759-2650

**Fax:** (519) 759-8912

**Website:** <http://www.woodland-centre.on.ca>

## LOCAL RESOURCES

### **Six Nations Polytechnic**

Six Nations of the Grand River Territory

2160 Fourth Line, P.O. Box 700

Ohswegen, ON N0A 1M0

**Phone:** (519) 445-0023

**Fax:** (519) 445-4416

**Website:** <http://www.snpolytechnic.com>

### **White Owl Native Ancestry**

65 Hanson Avenue

Kitchener, ON N2C 2H6

**Phone:** (519) 576-1329 ext. 2798

**Fax:** (519) 743-8769

**Email:** [jaime@wona.com](mailto:jaime@wona.com)

### **Healing of the Seven Generations**

300 Frederick Street

Kitchener, ON N2H 2N5

**Phone:** (519) 570-9118

**Fax:** (519) 570-9301

**Website:** [www.healingofthesevengenerations.weebly.com](http://www.healingofthesevengenerations.weebly.com)

#### **Contact:**

Donna Dubie, Executive Director

**Email:** [7generations@bellnet.ca](mailto:7generations@bellnet.ca)

### **KW Urban Native Wigwam Project**

300 Frederick Street

Kitchener, ON N2H 2N5

**Phone:** (519) 743-5868

**Fax:** (519) 743-6172

**Email:** [kwnativehousing@bellnet.ca](mailto:kwnativehousing@bellnet.ca)

**Website:** [www.kwurbannativewigwamproject.weebly.com](http://www.kwurbannativewigwamproject.weebly.com)

### **Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation**

2789 Mississauga Road, RR6

Hagersville, ON N0A 1H0

**Phone:** (905) 768-1133

**Fax:** (905) 768-1225

**Website:** <http://www.newcreditfirstnation.com>